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(54) **RECEIVER WITH VARIABLE GAIN  
CONTROL TRANSIMPEDANCE AMPLIFIER**

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(2013.01); H03H 2210/025 (2013.01)*

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See application file for complete search history.

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20, 2010, now Pat. No. 8,452,253.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

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<b>H04L 25/06</b>	(2006.01)
<b>H03F 1/08</b>	(2006.01)
<b>H03G 1/00</b>	(2006.01)
<b>H03G 3/30</b>	(2006.01)
<b>H03G 3/32</b>	(2006.01)
<b>H03H 11/12</b>	(2006.01)

According to one embodiment, a compact low-power receiver comprises first and second analog circuits connected by a digitally controlled interface circuit. The first analog circuit has a first direct-current (DC) offset and a first common mode voltage at an output, and the second analog circuit has a second DC offset and a second common mode voltage at an input. The digitally controlled interface circuit connects the output to the input, and is configured to match the first and second DC offsets and to match the first and second common mode voltages. In one embodiment, the first analog circuit is a variable gain control transimpedance amplifier (TIA) implemented using a current mode buffer, the second analog circuit is a second-order adjustable low-pass filter, whereby a three-pole adjustable low-pass filter in the compact low-power receiver is effectively produced.

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

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(2013.01); **H03G 1/0029** (2013.01); **H03G**  
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**11/1256** (2013.01); **H03F 2200/91** (2013.01);

**20 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets**

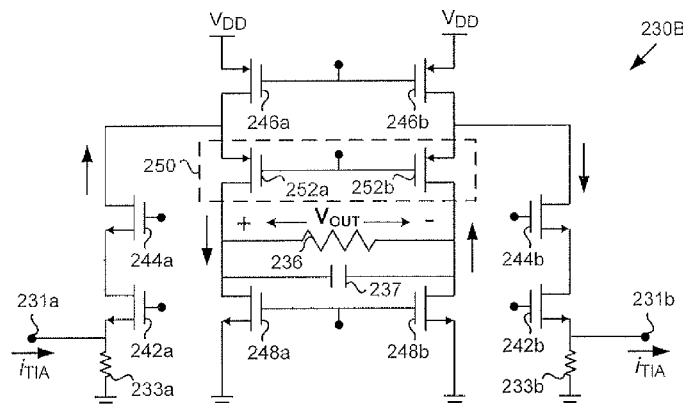


Fig. 1

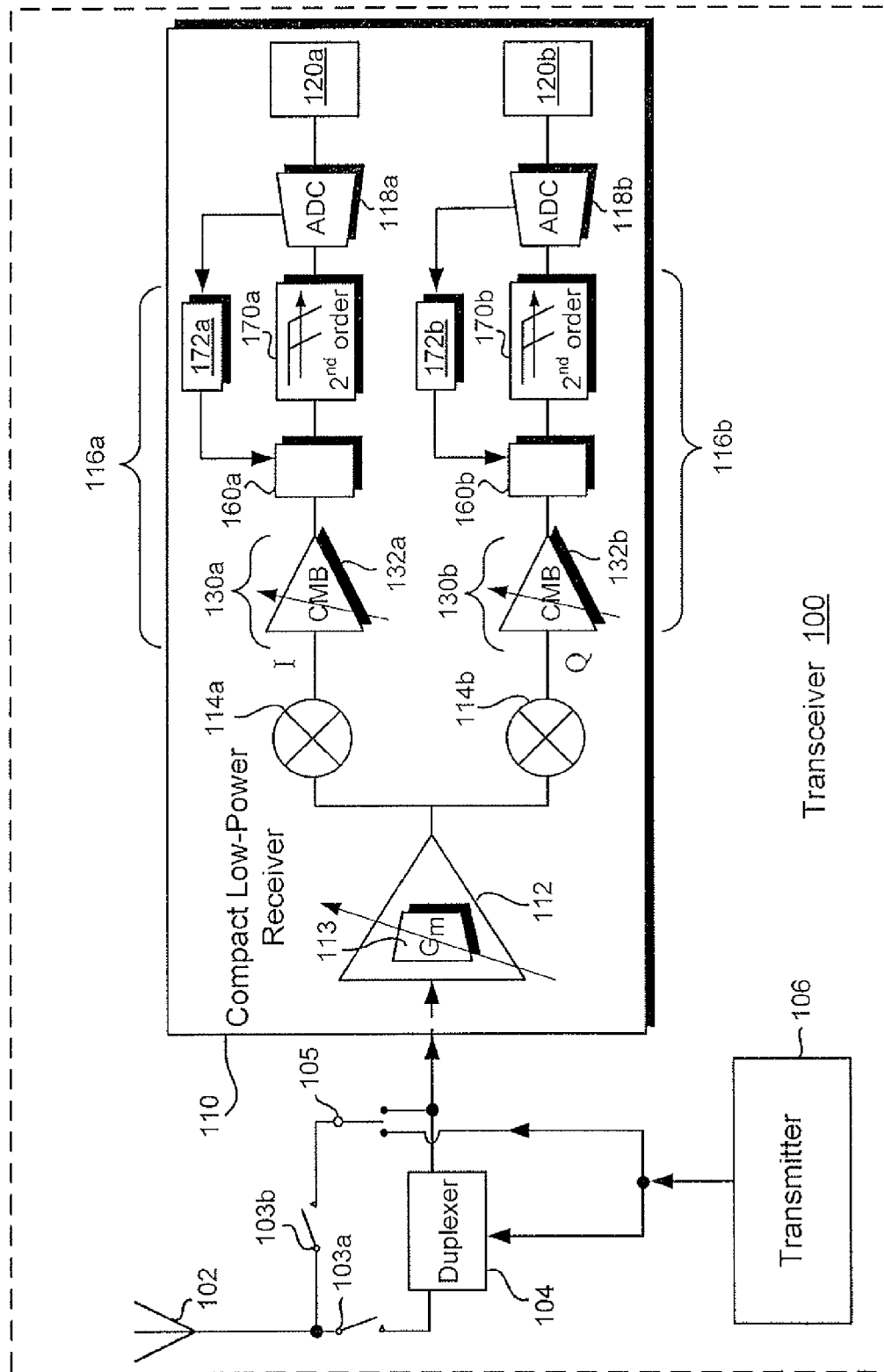


Fig. 2A

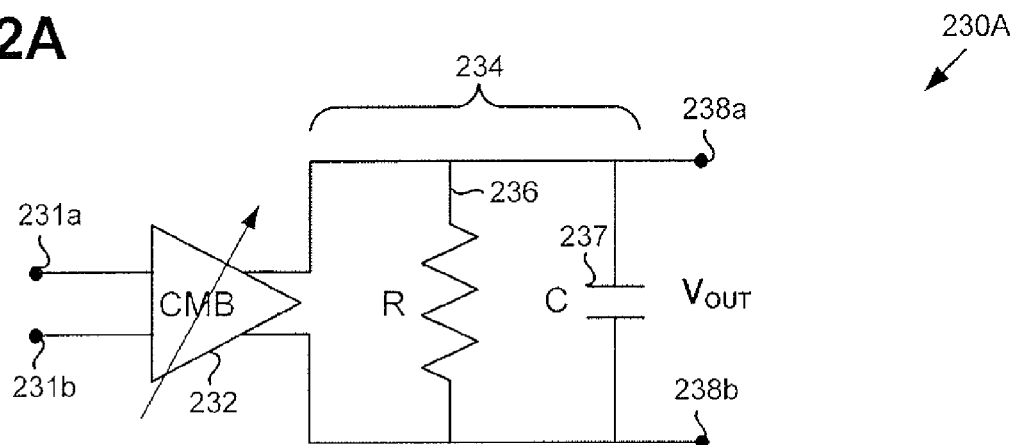


Fig. 2B

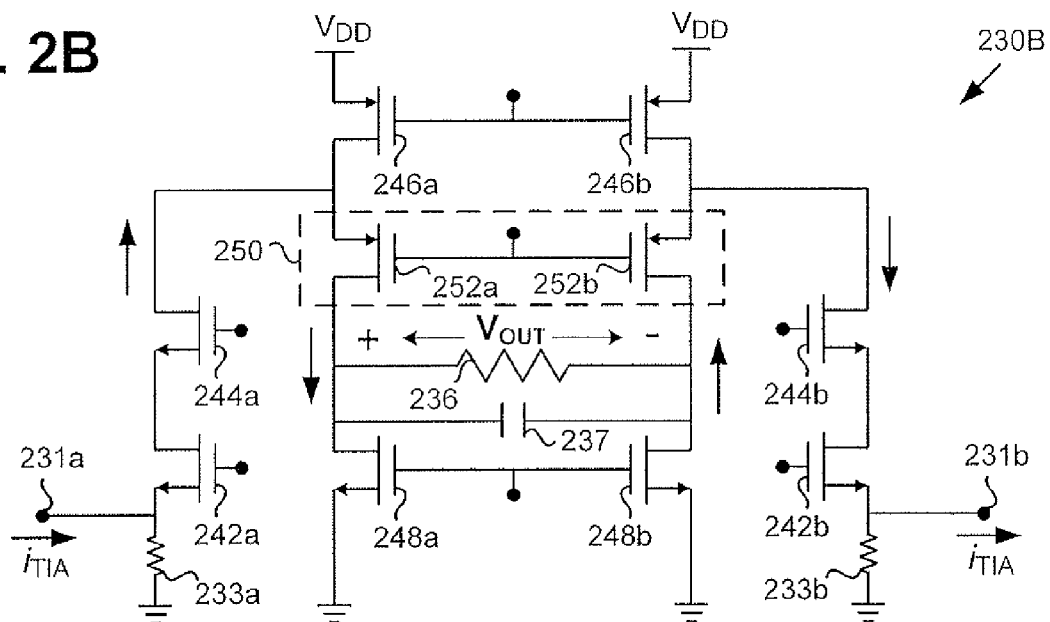


Fig. 2C

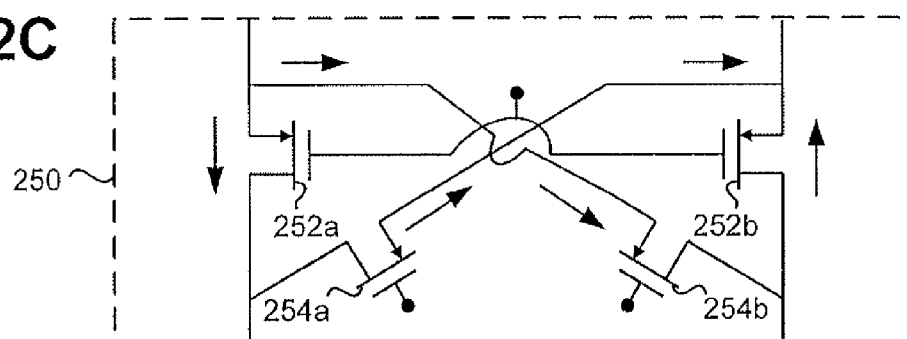


Fig. 3

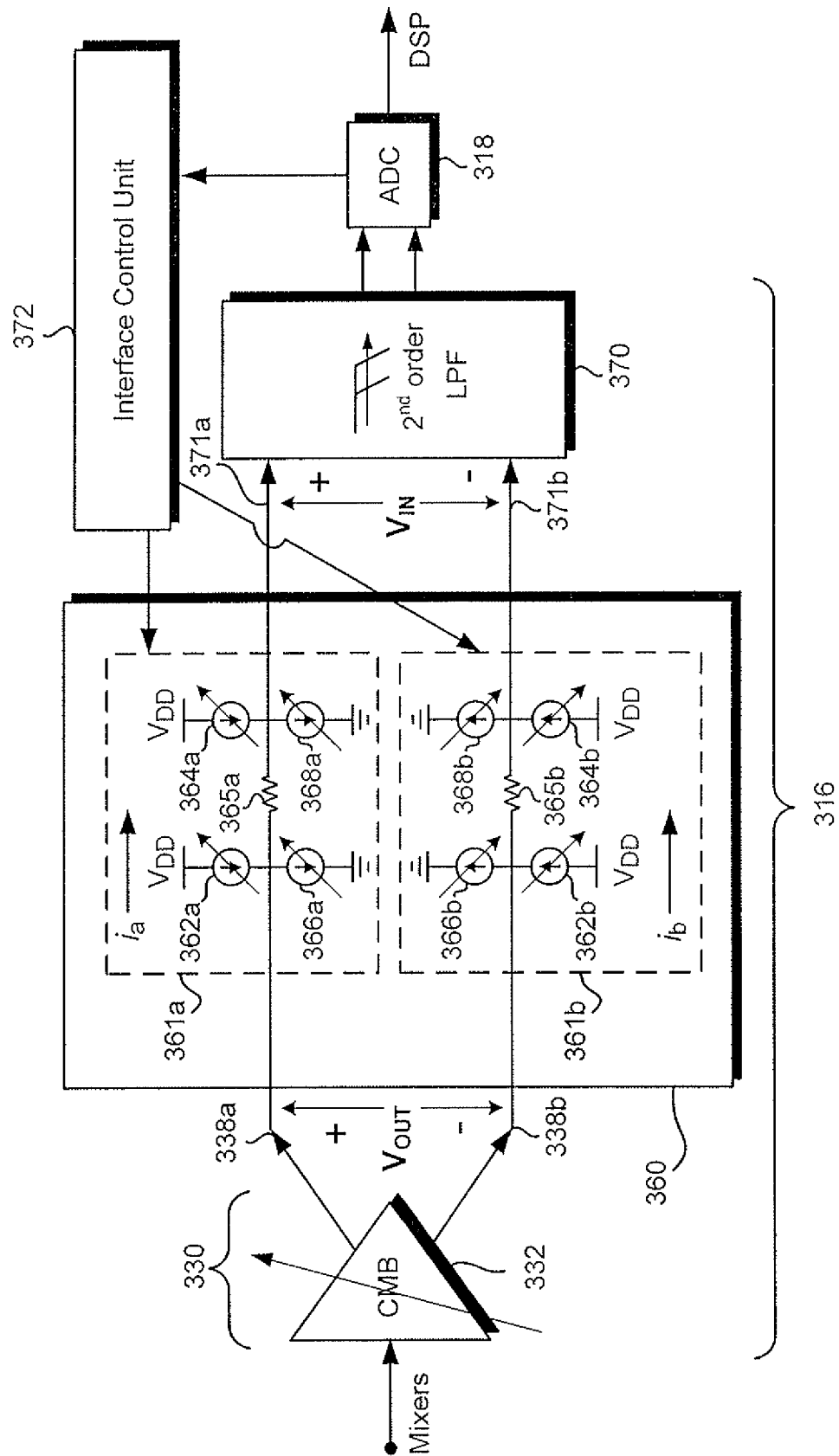


Fig. 4A

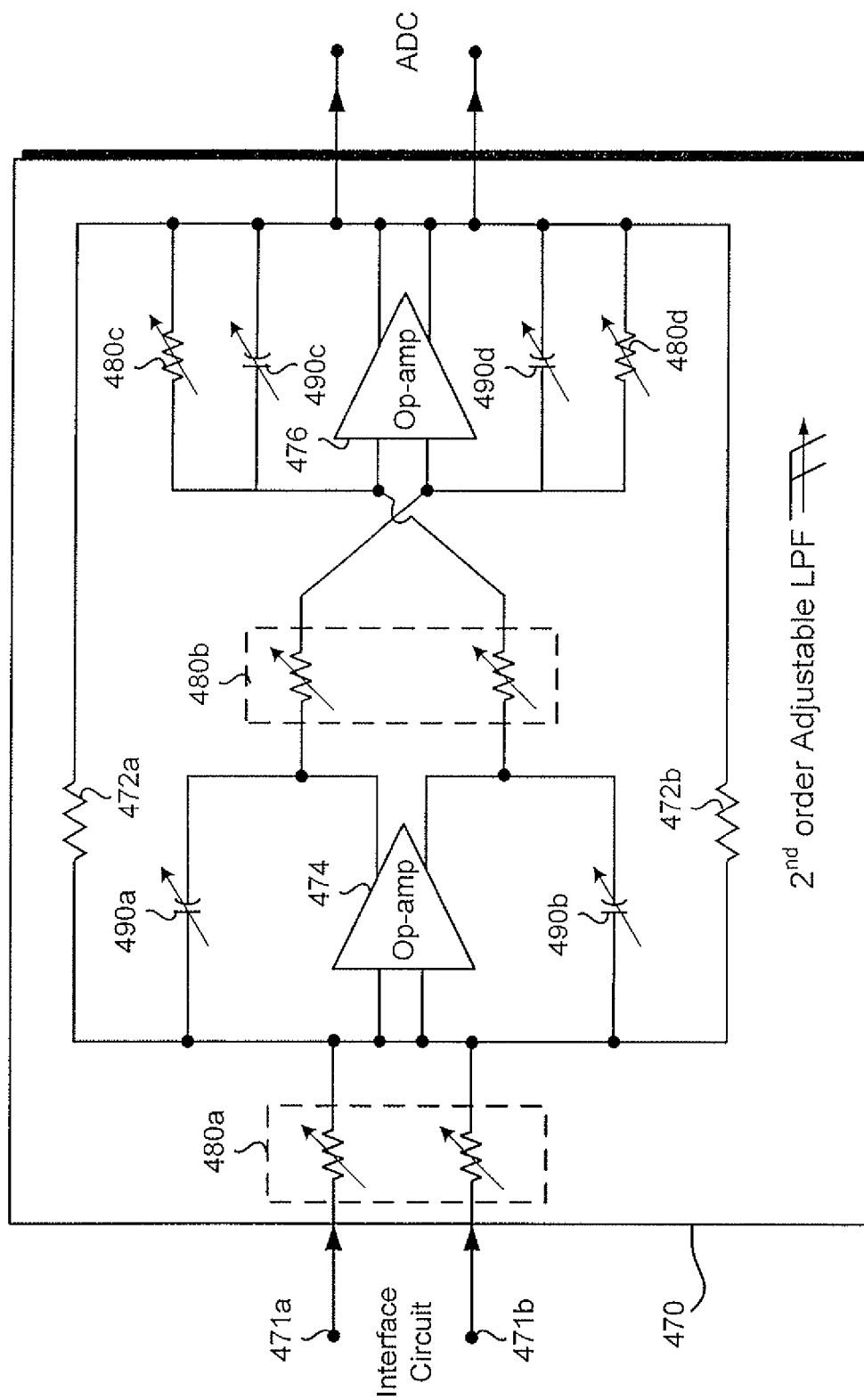


Fig. 4B

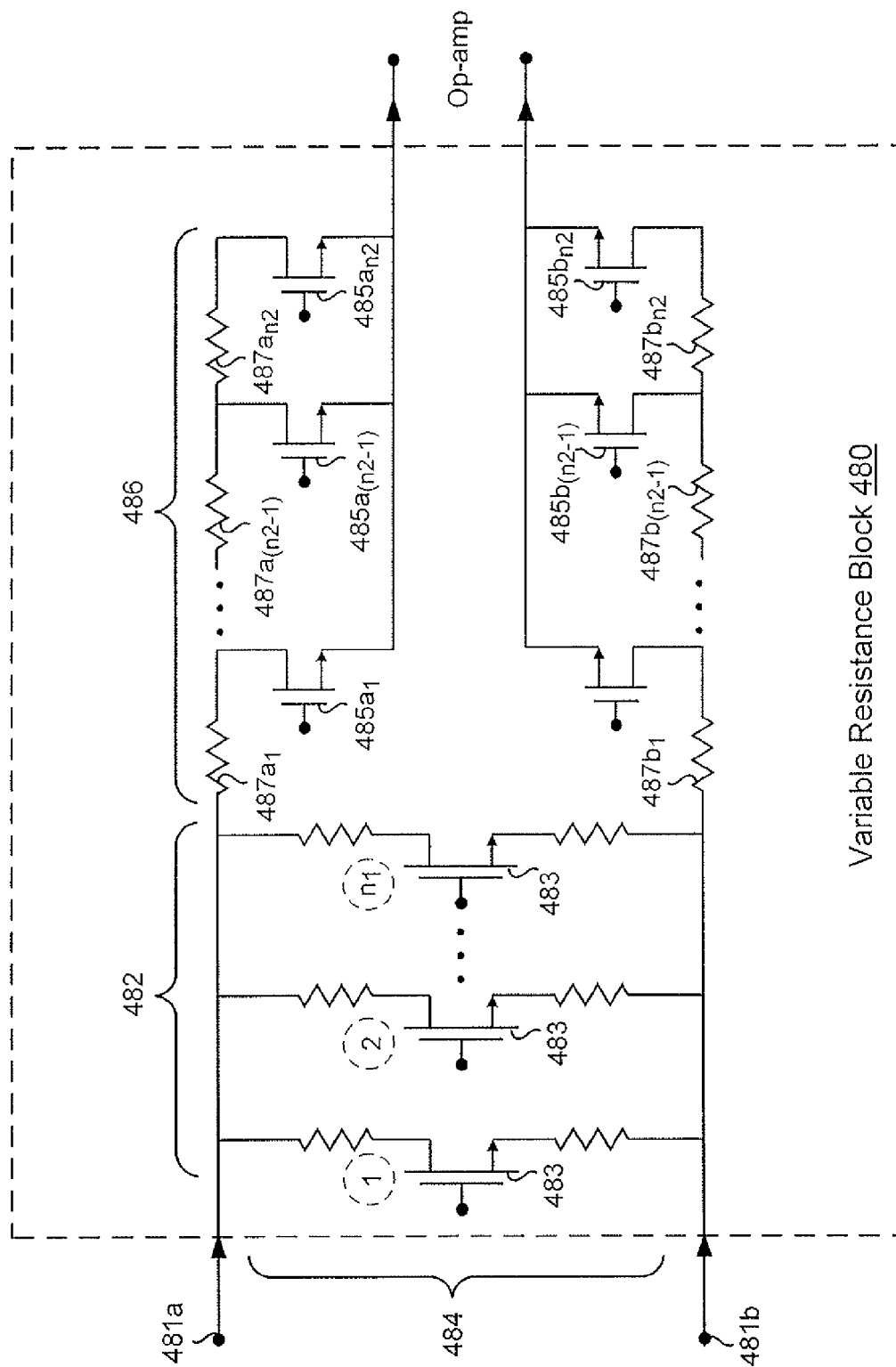
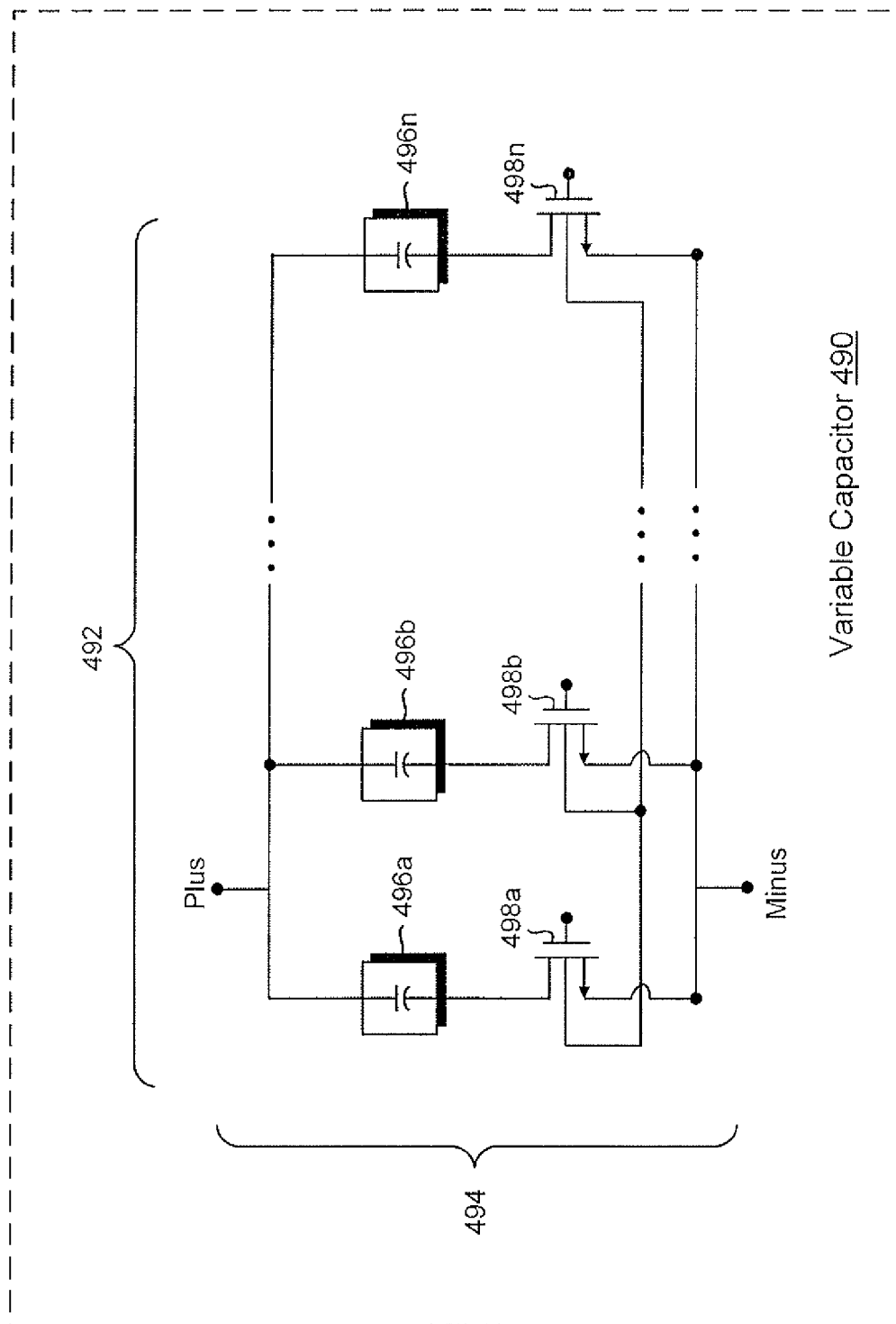


Fig. 4C



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## RECEIVER WITH VARIABLE GAIN CONTROL TRANSIMPEDANCE AMPLIFIER

This is a divisional of application Ser. No. 12/804,397 filed Jul. 20, 2010.

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### 1. Field of the Invention

The present invention is generally in the field of electronic circuits and systems. More specifically, the present invention is in the field of communications circuits and systems.

#### 2. Background Art

As communications technologies move toward ever smaller device sizes and adopt ever lower power consumption constraints, identifying and harnessing operational synergies through the use of circuit combinations capable of sharing system functionality becomes increasingly important. Consider, for example, a conventional radio frequency (RF) receiver implemented in a communications transceiver. A conventional receiver typically utilizes several stages to amplify and process what may often be a weak reception signal. For instance, a low noise amplifier (LNA) may be used to boost the reception signal prior to down-conversion from RF to baseband by a mixer stage in the receiver “front-end.” The baseband signal is then normally filtered by a high-order low-pass filter (LPF), for example a 4<sup>th</sup>-order or 5<sup>th</sup>-order LPF, which provides substantial additional “back-end” gain in the conventional receiver design.

In such a conventional receiver, the gain control provided by the receiver as a whole may be primarily produced by the receiver back-end, with the high-order LPF contributing a significant portion of the overall gain. Due to the stringent requirements imposed on the high-order LPF in conventional receiver designs, however, the high-order LPF typically consumes much of the power and dominates most of the area required to implement the receiver. As communications technologies move toward ever smaller device sizes and adopt ever lower power consumption constraints, as represented by the 40 nm technology node, for example, the relative bulk and high power consumption of conventional receiver architectures have become ever more undesirable.

Thus, there is a need to overcome the drawbacks and deficiencies in the art by providing an interface circuit configured to facilitate generation of the synergies possible through shared functionality by a circuit combination, thereby enabling design of more efficient communications systems, such as a compact low-power receiver architecture suitable for implementation as part of a mobile device transceiver, for example.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a compact low-power receiver including transimpedance amplifier, digitally controlled interface circuit, and low pass filter, substantially as shown in and/or described in connection with at least one of the figures, and as set forth more completely in the claims.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a compact low-power receiver according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2A is a block diagram of a current mode buffer based transimpedance amplifier (TIA) providing variable gain control according to one embodiment of the present invention.

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FIG. 2B illustrates a circuit corresponding to the variable gain control TIA of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2C illustrates exemplary cross-coupling of cascode devices included in the example circuit of FIG. 2B to provide gain control.

FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a digitally controlled interface circuit suitable for use in a compact low-power receiver, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4A is a block diagram of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable low-pass filter (LPF) suitable for use in a compact low-power receiver, according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 4B is a block diagram of a variable resistance block implemented in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF of FIG. 4A.

FIG. 4C is a block diagram of a variable capacitor implemented in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF of FIG. 4A.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a compact low-power receiver including transimpedance amplifier, digitally controlled interface circuit, and low pass filter. Although the invention is described with respect to specific embodiments, the principles of the invention, as defined by the claims appended herein, can obviously be applied beyond the specifically described embodiments of the invention described herein. Moreover, in the description of the present invention, certain details have been left out in order to not obscure the inventive aspects of the invention. The details left out are within the knowledge of a person of ordinary skill in the art.

The drawings in the present application and their accompanying detailed description are directed to merely exemplary embodiments of the invention. To maintain brevity, other embodiments of the invention, which use the principles of the present invention are not specifically described in the present application and are not specifically illustrated by the present drawings.

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of transceiver 100 comprising a receiver including a circuit combination having a shared functionality, which is implemented using a digitally controlled interface circuit, according to one embodiment of the present invention capable of overcoming the disadvantages associated with conventional designs. It is noted that the arrangement shown in FIG. 1 is for the purpose of providing an overview, and elements shown in that figure are conceptual representation of physical and electrical elements, and are thus not intended to show dimensions or relative sizes or scale.

Transceiver 100 comprises antenna 102, transceiver input/output routing switches 103a and 103b, duplexer 104, transmit/receive (T/R) switch 105, transmitter 106, and compact low-power receiver 110 including shared functionality circuit combinations 116a and 116b implemented using respective digitally controlled interface circuits 160a and 160b. As shown in FIG. 1, receiver 110 comprises low noise amplifier (LNA) 112 including adjustable transconductance amplifier 113 configured to provide digital gain control, mixers 114a and 114b working in conjunction with, respectively, in-phase (I) and quadrature-phase (Q) signals provided by a local oscillator (local oscillator not shown in FIG. 1), and variable gain control transimpedance amplifiers (TIAs) 130a and 130b including respective adjustable current mode buffers 132a and 132b. As further shown in FIG. 1, receiver 110 includes digitally controlled interface circuits 160a and 160b, second-order adjustable low-pass filters (2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPFs) 170a and 170b, analog-to-digital converters (ADCs) 118a and 118b, interface control units 172a and 172b, and



digital processors **120a** and **120b** to perform back-end processing of the respective I and Q signal components.

It is noted that although the I and Q receive signal paths are represented by single lines joining, for example, mixer **114a** and variable gain control TIA **130a**, variable gain control TIA **130a** and digitally controlled interface circuit **160a**, digitally controlled interface circuit **160a** and 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF **170a**, and 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF and ADC **118a**, those signals may in fact be differential signals. Transceiver **100** may be utilized in a cellular telephone or other mobile device communicating at radio frequency (RF), for example, such as in a frequency range from approximately 0.8 GHz to approximately 2.2 GHz.

According to the embodiment of FIG. 1, shared functionality circuit combination **116a** comprises variable gain control TIA **130a** and 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF **170a**, which may both be analog circuits, for example, and digitally controlled interface circuit **160a** mediating their connection. As shown in FIG. 1, digitally controlled interface circuit **160a** receives control data from ADC **118a**, via interface control unit **172a**. Similarly, shared functionality circuit combination **116b** comprises variable gain control TIA **130b**, 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF **170b**, and digitally controlled interface circuit **160b** receiving control data from ADC **118b** via interface control unit **172b**. It is noted that although interface control units **172a** and **172b** are shown as discrete circuit elements, in FIG. 1, in other embodiments interface control units **172a** and **172b** may be incorporated into respective digitally controlled interface circuits **160a** and **160b**, or into respective ADCs **118a** and **118b**, for example.

In marked contrast to conventional receiver implementations relying on substantial back-end gain, such as approximately 40 dB of gain produced by 4<sup>th</sup>-order or 5<sup>th</sup>-order LPFs, for example, the embodiment of the present invention shown in FIG. 1 produces a substantial majority of the overall receiver gain in the form of front-end gain. For example, the receiver front-end including LNA **112**, mixers **114a** and **114b**, and variable gain control TIAs **130a** and **130b** can be implemented so as to contribute approximately 50 dB of the overall receiver gain, while 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPFs **170a** and **170b** may be relied upon for a substantially smaller gain contribution, e.g., approximately 15 dB of gain.

The increase in front-end gain provided by compact low-power receiver **110** reduces the reliance on back-end gain in embodiments of the present invention, thereby relaxing the noise requirement on the LPFs used for filtering in the receiver back-end. Consequently, 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPFs **170a** and **170b** can be implemented in place of the 4<sup>th</sup>-order or 5<sup>th</sup>-order LPFs required by conventional designs. Moreover, due in part to the operational synergy of shared functionality circuit combinations **116a** and **116b** facilitated by respective digitally controlled interface circuits **160a** and **160b**, that substitution can be made without sacrificing receiver performance, thereby reducing the area requirements and power requirements flowing from use of high-order LPF in conventional designs without imposition of a significant performance cost. As a result, the compact low-power receiver architecture disclosed herein is particularly well suited to meet fine dimensional and low power supply constraints as fabrication technologies transition to the 40 nm node and beyond. Thus, in one embodiment, compact low-power receiver **110** can be an integrated circuit (IC) fabricated on a single semiconductor die using a 40 nm process technology, for example.

The operation of shared functionality circuit combinations **116a** and **116b**, as well as the advantages accruing from implementation of respective digitally controlled interface

circuits **160a** and **160b**, will now be further described by reference to FIGS. 2A, 2B, 2C, 3, 4A, 4B, and 4C. FIGS. 2A, 2B, and 2C show conceptual representations of a specific implementational example of a variable gain control TIA suitable for use in a shared functionality circuit combination, according to one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 3, shows an exemplary implementation for a digitally controlled interface circuit for facilitating shared functionality by a circuit combination, while FIGS. 4A, 4B, and 4C depict conceptual representations of an 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF and its included variable resistive and variable capacitive components.

Referring to FIG. 2A, FIG. 2A shows variable gain control TIA **230A** including adjustable current mode buffer **232**, according to one embodiment of the present invention, corresponding to variable gain control TIAs **130a** and **130b** including respective adjustable current mode buffers **132a** and **132b**, in FIG. 1. Adjustable current mode buffer **232** may be configured for use with a low voltage power supply, for example, an approximately 1.2V power supply.

As shown by FIG. 2A, in addition to adjustable current mode buffer **232**, variable gain control TIA **230A** comprises RC network **234**. RC network **234** includes output resistor **236** and output capacitor **237** coupled in parallel across differential outputs **238a** and **238b**. Output resistor **236** is configured to provide variable gain control by determining the maximum gain provided by variable gain control TIA **230A**. Together, output resistor **236** and output capacitor **237** determine the pole frequency of variable gain control TIA **230A**. As further shown by FIG. 2A, variable gain control TIA **230A** receives differential currents at differential inputs **231a** and **231b**, and provides a voltage signal  $V_{OUT}$  across differential outputs **238a** and **238b** coupled by output resistor **236** and output capacitor **237**.

Continuing to FIG. 2B, FIG. 2B illustrates circuit arrangement **230B** corresponding to variable gain control TIA **230A**, in FIG. 2A, according to one embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. 2B, circuit arrangement **230B** may be implemented using a folded cascode circuit topology, thereby enabling use of a low voltage power supply, such as an approximately 1.2V supply, for example, to power the variable gain control TIA corresponding to circuit arrangement **230B**.

Circuit arrangement **230B** includes input devices **242a** and **242b** coupled to respective differential inputs **231a** and **231b**, and coupled to ground through respective input resistors **233a** and **233b**. As also shown in FIG. 2B, circuit arrangement **230B** includes input cascode devices **244a** and **244b**, folded cascode grouping **250** including cascode output devices **252a** and **252b** coupled to output resistor **236** and output capacitor **237**, devices **246a** and **246b** coupled to supply voltage  $V_{DD}$ , and devices **248a** and **248b** coupled to ground. According to one embodiment, as shown for example in FIG. 2B, input devices **242a** and **242b** and input cascode devices **244a** and **244b** may be n-channel field-effect transistors (NFETs), and devices **248a** and **248b** may comprise NFETs sharing a common gate contact. In addition, according to the embodiment of FIG. 2B, devices **246a** and **246b** and output cascode devices **252a** and **252b** may comprise PFETs sharing common gate contacts. It is noted that the directional arrows shown in FIG. 2B are provided to indicate the direction of current flow in circuit arrangement **230B**.

Referring now to FIG. 2C, FIG. 2C shows a more detailed example of folded cascode grouping **250** illustrating exemplary cross-coupling of output cascode devices, e.g., output cascode PFETs **252a** and **252b**, to provide gain control, according to one embodiment of the present invention. As

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shown in FIG. 2C, in addition to output cascode devices **252a** and **252b**, folded cascode grouping **250** includes cross-coupling devices **254a** and **254b**, also shown as PFETs in that figure, configured to couple opposite power terminals of output cascode devices **252a** and **252b**. For example, cross-coupling device **254a** is shown to couple the drain of PFET **252a** to the source of PFET **252b**, while cross-coupling device **254b** couples the source of PFET **252a** to the drain of PFET **252b**.

As a result of the arrangement shown in FIG. 2C, current can flow from the power terminals of output cascode device **252a** to the opposite power terminals of output cascode device **252b** under the control of cross-coupling devices **254a** and **254b**, thereby controllably adjusting  $V_{OUT}$ . Thus, one or both of cross-coupling devices **254a** and **254b** can be selectively activated so as to contribute to the gain control provided by variable gain control TIA **230A**. Although the present figures show the cross-coupling scheme of FIG. 2C applied to output cascode devices **252a** and **252b**, in other embodiments a similar approach may be adopted using input cascade devices **244a** and **244b**, either in addition to, or in lieu of, cross-coupling of output cascode devices **252a** and **252b**. The approach to implementing gain control illustrated in FIGS. 2A, 2B, and 2C can provide a gain control range of greater than 30 dB, such as a gain control range of 50 dB, and provide accurate gain control steps of less than approximately 1 dB each, for example.

Moving on to FIG. 3, FIG. 3 is a block diagram of digitally controlled interface circuit **360** suitable for implementation in a shared functionality circuit combination represented by circuit combination **316**, according to one embodiment of the present invention. Shared functionality circuit combination **316** including variable gain control TIA **330**, digitally controlled interface circuit **360**, and 2nd-order adjustable LPF **370** corresponds to either or both of shared functionality circuit combinations **116a** and **116b** including respective variable gain control TIAs **130a** and **130b**, digitally controlled interface circuits **160a** and **160b**, and 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPFs **170a** and **170b**, in FIG. 1. Also shown in FIG. 3 are ADC **318** and interface control unit **372**, corresponding respectively to ADCs **118a** and **118b** and interface control units **172a** and **172b**, in FIG. 1.

As previously mentioned, variable gain control TIA **330** and 2nd-order adjustable LPF **370** are typically implemented as analog circuits. Consequently, despite their specific representation in the embodiment of FIG. 3, more generally, variable gain control TIA **330** and 2nd-order adjustable LPF **370** may correspond to any two analog circuits connected by digitally controlled interface circuit **360**. As shown in FIG. 3, digitally controlled interface circuit **360** receives control data from ADC **318**, e.g., digital control data, via interface control unit **372**. It is again noted that although interface control unit **372** is shown as a discrete circuit element, in other embodiments interface control unit **372** may be incorporated into digitally controlled interface circuit **360**, or into ADC **318**, for example.

As shown in FIG. 3, adjustable current mode buffer **332** provides differential outputs **338a** and **338b** of variable gain control TIA **330**, corresponding respectively to differential outputs **238a** and **238b**, in FIG. 2A. As further shown by FIG. 3, 2nd-order adjustable LPF **370** includes differential inputs **371a** and **371b**. Differential outputs **338a** and **338b** are characterized by voltage  $V_{OUT}$ , which can be understood to include contributions from a first direct-current (DC) offset and a first common mode voltage at differential outputs **338a** and **338b**. Analogously, differential inputs **371a** and **371b** are characterized by voltage  $V_{IN}$ , which can be understood to

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include contributions from a second DC offset and a second common mode voltage at differential inputs **371a** and **371b**. Digitally controlled interface circuit **360** is configured not only to connect differential outputs **338a** and **338b** to respective differential inputs **371a** and **371b**, but to match their respective first and second DC offsets and common mode voltages as well, thereby facilitating the shared functionality of circuit combination **316**.

According to the embodiment of FIG. 3, digitally controlled interface circuit **360** includes current blocks **361a** and **361b** configured to generate currents " $i_a$ " and " $i_b$ " flowing through respective resistors **365a** and **365b**. Currents  $i_a$  and  $i_b$  can be tuned using the adjustable current sources internal to respective current blocks **361a** and **361b**. For example, current  $i_a$  can be tuned using adjustable current sources **362a**, **364a**, **366a**, and **368a**, while tuning of current  $i_b$  can be performed using adjustable current sources **362b**, **364b**, **366b**, and **368b**. In one embodiment, the adjustable current sources internal to current blocks **361a** and **361b** may comprise cross-coupled pairs (cross-coupling not explicitly shown in FIG. 3). For example, adjustable current sources **362a** and **368a** may be cross-coupled so as to be concurrently adjusted by the same trimming code. Similarly, adjustable current sources **364a** and **366a**, **362b** and **368b**, and **361b** and **366b** may each compose a cross-coupled adjustable current source pair.

As may be understood from an examination of FIG. 3:

$$V_{OUT} = V_{IN} + R(i_a - i_b); \quad (\text{Equation 1})$$

where R is the resistance value of nominally identical resistors **365a** and **365b**.

Moreover:

$$\frac{V_{OUT \text{ COMMON MODE}}}{V_{IN \text{ COMMON MODE}}} = R[(i_a + i_b)/2] + \quad (\text{Equation 2})$$

According to Equations 1 and 2, the first DC offset and first common mode voltage at differential outputs **338a** and **338b** can be matched to the second DC offset and second common mode voltage at inputs **371a** and **371b** through the selection of appropriate trimming codes for the adjustable current sources contained by each of current blocks **361a** and **361b**. Those trimming codes, e.g., digital trimming codes, can be generated by interface control unit **372**, according to data provided by ADC **318**, for example.

According to the specific embodiment shown in FIG. 3, the shared functionality of circuit combination **316** may correspond to implementation of a higher order receive signal filtering than can be provided by 2nd-order adjustable LPF **370** alone. For example, 2<sup>nd</sup>-order LPF **370** represents a two-pole adjustable LPF. However, an effective three-pole adjustable LPF can be generated by the synergy produced by shared functionality circuit combination **316**. In other words, variable gain control TIA **330** can be configured to supply one pole of three-pole LPF, while 2nd-order adjustable LPF **370** can supply an additional two poles, resulting in shared functionality circuit combination **316** effectively implementing a three-pole adjustable LPF. Moreover, that shared functionality is facilitated by digitally controlled interface circuit **360**, which may be used to connect variable gain control TIA **330** and 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF **370**, and to provided DC offset and common mode voltage matching for variable gain control TIA **330** and 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF **370**. In one embodiment, for example, shared functionality circuit combination **316** may implement a three-pole adjustable low-pass Chebyshev filter.

Continuing to FIG. 4A, FIG. 4A is a block diagram of 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF **470** suitable for use in a circuit

combination having a shared functionality, according to one embodiment of the present invention. Second-order adjustable LPF 470 having differential inputs 471a and 471b corresponds to 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 370 having differential inputs 371a and 371b, in FIG. 3. It is noted that although the present embodiment represents a specific implementation of a 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF, the present inventive principles can be applied more generally to other types of adjustable filters, such as 3<sup>rd</sup>-order or higher adjustable LPFs, or adjustable high-pass, band-pass, or notch filters, for example.

As shown in FIG. 4A, according to the present embodiment, 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470 includes variable resistance input block 480a coupled to differential inputs 471a and 471b. In addition, 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470 comprises operational amplifiers (op-amps) 474a and 474b, variable resistance transition block 480b, fixed resistors 472a and 472b, variable capacitors 490a, 490b, 490c, and 490d (hereinafter “variable capacitors 490a-490d”), and variable resistors 480c and 480d.

As further shown in FIG. 4A, each input to op-amps 474 and 476 is coupled to a corresponding op-amp output by a respective one of variable capacitors 490a-490d. Gain control for 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470 can be provided through adjustment of variable resistance input block 480a, for example, while the pole and frequency characteristics of 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470 can be tuned using variable resistors 480c and 480d, and variable capacitors 490a-490d, for example. Thus, in one embodiment 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470 may be implemented in a multi-mode RF receiver to concurrently support communications in a second-generation wireless telephone technology (2G) mode, as well as in a 3G mode, for example, through scaling of variable capacitors 490a-490d and tuning of the variable resistances internal to 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470.

Moreover, by cross-coupling the outputs of op-amp 474 to the inputs of op-amp 476 through variable resistance transition block 480b, the present inventive concepts enable reduction of the number of op-amps required for filter implementation, when compared with conventional designs. For example, a conventional two-pole bi-quad filter design requires three op-amps for its implementation, while the present embodiment provides a two-pole adjustable LPF using no more than two op-amps, e.g., op-amps 474 and 476. In other words, FIG. 4A discloses a design in which the number of op-amps required for filter implementation does not exceed the number of poles characterizing the filter.

Referring to FIG. 4B, FIG. 4B is a block diagram of a variable resistance block implemented in 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470 of FIG. 4A, according to one embodiment of the present invention. Variable resistance block 480 can correspond to either or both of variable resistance input block 480a and variable resistance transition block 480b. In addition, in one embodiment, variable resistors 480c and 480d can be implemented in combination according to the arrangement shown in FIG. 4B.

As shown in FIG. 4B, variable resistance block 480 comprises network 486 of switchable unit resistors arranged in series, and parallel array 482 of switchable resistors situated between differential inputs 481a and 481b of variable resistance block 480 and series resistance network 486. For example, where variable resistance block 480 corresponds to variable resistance input block 480a, parallel array 482 is situated between differential inputs 471a and 471b of 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470 and series resistance network 486. In that particular implementation, adjustment of the resistance provided by series resistance network 486 may be performed to provide gain control, while adjustment of the resis-

tance provided by parallel array 482 can be performed to assure constant input impedance to variable resistance block 480.

According to the embodiment of FIG. 4B, parallel array 482 comprises a number “n<sub>1</sub>” of resistive branches 484, each coupled in parallel to all others, and each controlled by a respective switch 483. As may be understood from the embodiment of FIG. 4B, selective activation or deactivation of one or more of switches 483 serves to vary the resistance of parallel array 482. As further shown in FIG. 4B, series resistance network 486 of variable resistance block 480 comprises unit resistors 487a<sub>1</sub>, 487a<sub>2</sub>, . . . , 487a<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub> (hereinafter “unit resistors 487a<sub>1</sub>-487a<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub>”) which can be switched in or out of series resistance network 486 by respective switches 485a<sub>1</sub>, 485a<sub>2</sub>, . . . , 485a<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub> (hereinafter “switches 485a<sub>1</sub>-485a<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub>”). In addition, series resistance network 486 also comprises unit resistors 487b<sub>1</sub>, 487b<sub>2</sub>, . . . , 487b<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub> (hereinafter “unit resistors 487b<sub>1</sub>-487b<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub>”) which can be switched in or out of series resistance network 486 by respective switches 485b<sub>1</sub>, 485b<sub>2</sub>, . . . , 485b<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub> (hereinafter “switches 485b<sub>1</sub>-485b<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub>”). In one embodiment, for example, switches 483, 485a<sub>1</sub>-485a<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub>, and 485b<sub>1</sub>-485b<sub>n<sub>2</sub></sub> can comprise native devices, thereby resulting in a reduced “ON” resistance.

Continuing to FIG. 4C, FIG. 4C is a block diagram of variable capacitor 490 implemented in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF of FIG. 4A, according to one embodiment of the present invention. Variable capacitor 490 correspond to any or all of variable capacitors 490a-490d, in FIG. 4A. As shown in FIG. 4C, variable capacitor 490 comprises network 492 of switchable unit capacitors arranged in parallel. For example, according to the embodiment of FIG. 4C, network 492 comprises a number “n” of switched unit capacitor branches 494, each including a unit capacitor 496a, 496b, . . . , 496n (hereinafter “unit capacitors 496a-496n”) and a respective switch 498a, 498b, . . . , 498n (hereinafter “switches 498a-498n”) for switching respective unit capacitors 496a-496n into and out of the collective capacitance produced by network 492. Implementation of the embodiments shown in FIGS. 4B and 4C in the embodiment of FIG. 4A, for example, can enable tuning of 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF 470 to advantageously ensure that the RC of the filter remains substantially constant over process-voltage-temperature (PVT) variations.

Thus, by providing a digitally controlled interface circuit to connect two analog circuits and to concurrently perform DC offset and common mode voltage matching, embodiments of the present invention enable circuit combinations exhibiting shared functionality. For example, embodiments of the present invention interface a variable gain control TIA and a 2<sup>nd</sup>-order adjustable LPF to produce an effective three-pole adjustable LPF suitable for use in a compact low-power RF receiver or transceiver. Moreover, by implementing variable capacitors and variable resistors using respective networks of switchable unit capacitors and unit resistors, embodiments of the present invention enable a highly tunable LPF capable of maintaining a substantially constant RC over PVT variations.

From the above description of the invention it is manifest that various techniques can be used for implementing the concepts of the present invention without departing from its scope. Moreover, while the invention has been described with specific reference to certain embodiments, a person of ordinary skill in the art would recognize that changes can be made in form and detail without departing from the spirit and the scope of the invention. The described embodiments are to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive. It should also be understood that the invention is not limited to the particular embodiments described herein, but is capable

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of many rearrangements, modifications, and substitutions without departing from the scope of the invention.

The invention claimed is:

1. A variable gain control transimpedance amplifier (TIA) in a compact low-power receiver, said variable gain control TIA comprising:

a current mode buffer configured for use with a low voltage power supply, said current mode buffer receiving differential current inputs and providing first and second differential outputs of said variable gain control TIA; and at least one resistor and at least one capacitor coupled in parallel between said first and second differential outputs, wherein

said current mode buffer comprises a first output cascode device connected to said first differential output.

2. The variable gain control TIA of claim 1, wherein said variable gain control TIA is configured to provide a gain control range of at least approximately 30 dB.

3. The variable gain control TIA of claim 2, wherein the variable gain control TIA is configured to provide accurate gain control steps of less than approximately 1 dB each.

4. The variable gain control TIA of claim 1, wherein said low voltage power supply comprises a less than approximately 1.3V power supply.

5. The variable gain control TIA of claim 1, wherein said compact low-power receiver utilizes a three-pole low-pass Chebyshev filter.

6. The variable gain control TIA of claim 1, wherein said current mode buffer comprises a second output cascode device connected to said second differential output.

7. The variable gain control TIA of claim 6, wherein opposite power terminals of said first and second output cascode devices are coupled by first and second cross-coupling devices.

8. The variable gain control TIA of claim 7, wherein:

the first cross-coupling device is configured to couple a drain of the first output cascode device to a source of the second output cascode device; and

the second cross-coupling device is configured to couple a source of the first output cascode device to a drain of the second output cascode device.

9. The variable gain control TIA of claim 7, wherein at least one of the first and second cross-coupling devices is configured to be selectively activated so as to contribute to a gain control provided by the variable gain control TIA.

10. The variable gain control TIA of claim 1, wherein said current mode buffer comprises first and second input cascode devices coupling respective first and second input devices of said variable gain control TIA.

11. The variable gain control TIA of claim 10, wherein opposite power terminals of said first and second input cascode devices are coupled by first and second cross-coupling devices, thereby enabling said variable gain control.

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12. The variable gain control TIA of claim 10, wherein the first and second input devices and the first and second input cascode devices are n-channel field-effect transistors (NFETs).

13. A plurality of circuitries, comprising:

said variable gain control TIA according to claim 1, an adjustable low-pass filter (LPF), and a digitally controlled interface circuit connecting an output of said variable gain control TIA to an input of said adjustable LPF.

14. The plurality of circuitries of claim 13, wherein said digitally controlled interface circuit is configured to match a first direct-current (DC) offset and first common mode voltage of said output to a respective second DC offset and second common mode voltage of said input.

15. The variable gain control TIA of claim 1, wherein said low voltage power supply is a 1.2V power supply.

16. The variable gain control TIA of claim 1, wherein the at least one resistor is configured to provide a variable gain control by determining a maximum gain provided by the variable gain control TIA.

17. The variable gain control TIA of claim 1, wherein a pole frequency of the variable gain control TIA is determined by the at least one resistor and the at least one capacitor.

18. A variable gain control transimpedance amplifier (TIA) in a compact low-power receiver, said variable gain control TIA comprising:

a current mode buffer configured for use with a low voltage power supply, said current mode buffer receiving differential current inputs and providing first and second differential outputs of said variable gain control TIA; and at least one resistor coupled between said first and second differential outputs wherein

said current mode buffer comprises first and second input cascode devices coupling respective first and second input devices of said variable gain control TIA.

19. The variable gain control TIA of claim 18, wherein said variable gain control TIA is configured to provide a gain control range of at least approximately 30 dB.

20. A method of using a variable gain control transimpedance amplifier (TIA) in a compact low-power receiver, said variable gain control TIA including a current mode buffer configured for use with a low voltage power supply, the method comprising:

receiving, by the current mode buffer, differential current inputs; and

providing first and second differential outputs of said variable gain control TIA, wherein

at least one resistor and at least one capacitor are coupled in parallel between said first and second differential outputs; and

said current mode buffer comprises a first output cascode device connected to said first differential output.

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